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SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO: DISSENTION IN THE RULING PARTY

Classified By: CDA Samuel C. Laeuchli for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On July 17th, a key powerbroker in the ruling political party was suspended indefinitely. Salif Diallo, an important player on the Burkinabe political scene and formerly a close ally of President Compaore, was disciplined by the party after he publicly criticized the State institutions and indirectly the President and his family. The move by the party is an indicator of internal political maneuverings among potential successors to Compaore, including his brother. END SUMMARY

What happened? Why such turmoil over the comments of a single man?

12. (C) Salif Diallo, aka "Gorba," is a heavyweight in the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), the majority presidential political party. For the last twenty years he has been an unfaltering supporter of President Compaore, has been his presidential campaign director, close advisor and has spent 18 years in the government. In November 2000 Diallo was nominated as Minister of Agriculture. Eight years later he was dismissed, some say as a result of tensions with the President's influential brother and possible presidential successor, Francois Compaore. In a move to sideline Diallo, the President sent him to a "golden exile" as Burkina's Ambassador to Austria. Within the CDP, Diallo was a Regional Political Commissioner for the North, and elected as first Vice-President of the Party until his dismissal in July 2009 (Note: The CDP, established in 1996 by Compaore, represents the unification of ten different allied parties and habitually draws more than 80 percent of votes. End Note.)

13. (C) On July 8, 2009 Diallo was interviewed by a Burkinabe newspaper (l'Observateur Paalga), and when asked to comment about the political situation in Burkina Faso he explained that he advocated a "new institutional start." Encouraged to elaborate further, Diallo suggested that not only should the National Assembly be dissolved, but also that a government of national unity should be established together with a parliamentary regime. The most controversial remarks attacked the Presidency by stating that Burkina Faso should not engage in "patrimonisation" of that supreme institution, meaning that the succession should not be a family affair. The thinly veiled accusation was that Francois Compaore should not be designated as President Compaore's de facto successor.

14. (C) Diallo's reform suggestions were not in line with official CDP party policy and were taken by the party leaders as a direct attack on the President and the state institutions. On July 15th, the CDP governing bureau convoked Diallo for an explanation and gave him a chance to retract his statement. While he apologized for the manner in which these statements had been made, he did not recant his declarations and as a result the fourth CDP party Congress (July 23-25) voted to suspend his membership indefinitely.

The political maneuvering angle: the real issue behind the sanction

14. (C) Officially the CDP disciplined Diallo for three reasons: first for violating the CDP's internal code of conduct and having gravely ignored the organizational principles of the CDP, secondly for having negatively impacted the cohesion of the party, and thirdly for refusing to recant his critique of the national institutions. In reality, Diallo was sanctioned for attacking the President's family by raising the question of his succession and seemingly opposing himself to a familial succession order (Note: While Diallo's suspension from the party attracted a great deal of media attention, he is not the first senior member of the party to have been disciplined, but certainly the most visible and vocal one. End Note.)

15. (C) COMMENT: Clearly Diallo had his eye on the Presidency (probably not for 2010, but rather for 2015) so his call for changes in the institutions and warning about "patrimonisation" come from his vested interest in ensuring that Compaore's succession is an open game. Within the CDP there are also other claimants to the presidential succession. The three heavyweights that remain within the CDP and who have presidential aspirations are: Roch Marc Christian Kabore (President of the National Assembly and President of the CDP), Simon Compaore (current mayor of Ouagadougou and second VP of the party), and Francois Compaore (advisor and brother of the President). It appears that the CDP's veneer of unfaltering unity has begun to

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crack. Diallo's suspension has prompted many CDP members from his native region of the Yatenga to suspend their own membership while a number of voices have risen to say that if the CDP does not reinstate Diallo, then the Yatenga region will become "the bastion of opposition." None of this is likely to weaken President Compaore's present political position, but shows that Burkinabe are seriously thinking about the succession and what it will mean for the country. END COMMENT.
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